



THE HealthConnection



The 2020 Census at a Glance

source: Census Bureau

The U.S. Census Bureau is the federal government's largest statistical agency. They are dedicated to providing current facts and figures about America's people, places, and economy. Federal law protects the confidentiality of all individual responses the Census Bureau collects.

The U.S. Constitution requires that each decade there is a count—or a census—of America's population (i.e. every person that lives in the United States regardless of their immigration status). The census provides vital information for you and your community.

- It determines how many representatives each state gets in Congress and is used to redraw district boundaries. Redistricting counts are sent to the states by March 31, 2021.
- Communities rely on census statistics to plan for a variety of resident needs including new roads, schools, and emergency services.
- Businesses use census data to determine where to open places to shop.

Each year, the federal government distributes more than \$675 billion to states and communities based on Census Bureau data.

In 2020, the Census Bureau will implement new technology to make it easier than ever to respond to the census. For the first time, you will be able to respond online or by phone in English or in 12 additional languages beginning in mid-March. If necessary, you can respond in person beginning in mid-May when census takers will visit all households that have not yet responded.

The law requires the Census Bureau to keep your information confidential and use your responses only to produce statistics. They cannot publicly release your responses in any way that could identify you. They will never share your information with immigration enforcement agencies such as ICE, law enforcement agencies such as the FBI or police, or allow it to be used to determine your eligibility for government benefits.

Responding is important. A complete count helps ensure that services like Medicare, Medicaid, social security, and public transportation can support those who need them.

Responding is safe. All of the information you share with the Census Bureau is protected by law and cannot be used against you.

Responding is accessible. The Census Bureau is doing everything it can to ensure the ways to respond are accessible for everyone.

Any questions? Please visit 2020census.gov.



Why Are Census Workers Out in Our Communities?

source: Census Bureau

You might see census takers in your neighborhood for a few different reasons:

- They are verifying addresses in preparation for the census.
- They are collecting responses to the census or another survey.
- They are dropping off census materials.
- They are conducting quality checks related to the census.

Census takers who verify addresses are called address canvassers. They help ensure an accurate and complete count by verifying addresses and noting where houses, apartments, shelters, and other residences are located. Census takers will attempt to knock on every door in the neighborhood they are canvassing.

In May 2020, census takers begin visiting homes that haven't responded to the 2020 Census to help ensure everyone is counted. At the same time, other Census Bureau representatives will be visiting homes for ongoing surveys, such as the American Community Survey.

By April 1, 2020, all homes will receive an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. The best way to avoid a follow-up visit from a census taker is to fill out the 2020 Census questionnaire online, by phone, or by mail as soon as you receive your invitation to participate.



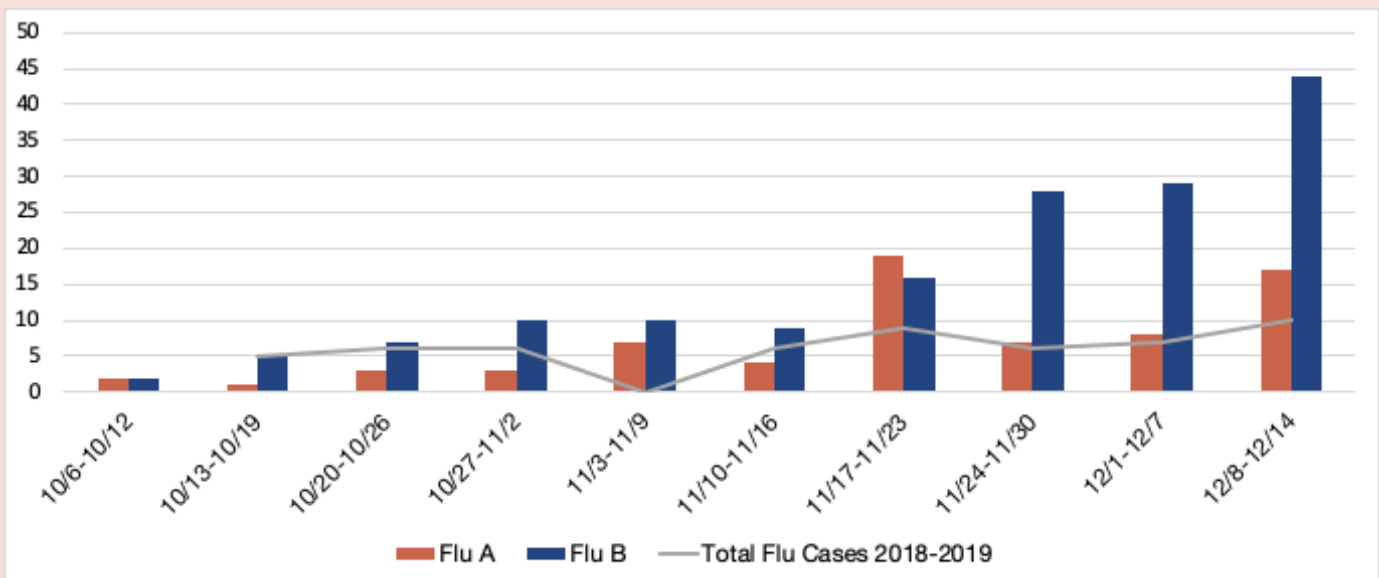
Flu Update by Julia Agawu, MPH

The 2019-2020 Influenza season has been off to a strong start with a higher number of cases each week compared to 2018-2019 Influenza season. A total of 231 Influenza cases have been reported this year in our Jurisdiction.

The CDC states that this year's flu activity had an early start in October with mainly Influenza B cases. This comes as a surprise because Influenza B is typically more prominent in the second half of influenza season (January – March). Although Influenza cases are significantly higher than previous years, Influenza B illnesses tend to be a little less severe than Influenza A.

Nonetheless, both strains are still highly contagious and as always we encourage everyone to get their Influenza Vaccine!

Flu Season Comparison 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 Seasons





Teen Dating Violence

by Bayli Avery

A student from our region who experienced dating violence wanted to share her story. She hopes to help people in our area better understand what dating violence is and, hopefully, by sharing her experiences we can prevent more teens from experiencing this violence.

Her experiences are sadly, more common than we like to admit. Every year, nearly 1.5 million high school students in the US experience dating violence. Females aged 16-24 have the highest rate of intimate partner violence which is nearly triple the national average. Not only does this cause immediate physical and mental harm, but it also has a significant impact on their future. Teenage victims of dating violence are more likely to develop depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and other unhealthy behaviors.

Warning: The story below shares real experiences of dating violence and may cause distress and/or discomfort in some readers.

The female student explained, “A little over a year ago I started dating this charming guy. I thought it was sweet that he gave me all his attention, wanted to know every aspect of my life, and wanted to be involved in it all. Two months into our relationship, however, we got into a fight and he shoved me down and grabbed my wrists tightly. It started this way but progressively got worse. He started hitting me and would sometimes choke me. Once at my aunt’s house, he choked me so badly, I had double vision and threw up. My neck bruised and hurt for days.”

“In addition to being physically abusive, he would say terrible things to me. He’d tell me I was unattractive, I was too loud and I was embarrassing. After our fights, however, he would apologize, cry and make me feel like it was my fault. I started making excuses for him, apologizing for his behavior, covering up the situation and insisting nothing was wrong. I didn’t want to lose him or his family. I loved him and had these memories of when he was thoughtful and sweet. I saw the best and worst parts of him and just wanted to help.”

“The truth eventually got harder and harder to hide and I finally admitted what was happening and that I needed help. Coming forward, and choosing to let go of him and his family was one of the hardest things I’ve ever had to choose. I greatly encourage anyone in an abusive relationship (physically, mentally, emotionally) to reach out and get help. If you find yourself lying to your friends, family, or just people in general, or you are covering up, making excuses for and about your relationship, you shouldn’t be in it. I know how hard it is to let go of someone you love, but you can’t let the abuser keep abusing you, you aren’t helping yourself, or them.”

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline
866-331-9474

National Domestic Violence Hotline
800-799-SAFE (7233)

Noah Project Crisis Hotline
325-676-7107



January is Birth Defect Prevention Month

by Jamie Small, MS, RD, LD

January is birth defect prevention month. Birth defects can occur at any time during pregnancy, but many occur in the first 3 months when the baby's organs are forming. Others occur in the last 6 months of pregnancy as the baby continues to develop.

Certain factors can increase the risk for birth defects including smoking, drinking or taking drugs, taking certain medications, having uncontrolled blood pressure or blood sugar, having a family history of birth defects or getting pregnant after age 34. Although not all birth defects are preventable, you can increase your chances of having a healthy baby by making changes to your health and diet before and during your pregnancy. Below are five steps you can take to help you have a healthy pregnancy:

1. Start taking 400 mcg of Folic Acid daily

During pregnancy, several nutrients are important for having a healthy baby including folic acid, calcium, protein, fiber, and iron. Folic acid is a B vitamin found in fortified breads, cereals, and pastas as well as beans, nuts, leafy vegetables, and citrus fruits. The body uses folic acid to make and maintain all the cells in our bodies.

If we do not get enough folic acid in our diet during pregnancy, this increases the risk that the baby will develop neural tube defects (NTDs). Neural tube defects are birth defects of the brain, spine, and spinal cord that occur in 3000 pregnancies a year in the United States.

The neural tube develops in the first few weeks of pregnancy, often before you know you are pregnant. So if you plan to conceive, start taking 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid daily at least 1 month prior to conception and 600 mcg of folic acid during pregnancy to lower your baby's risk of NTDs.

Because almost 50% of all pregnancies are unplanned, the CDC recommends that all women of childbearing age take a daily vitamin that contains at least 400 mcg of folic acid. This can prevent the occurrence of up to 70 percent of NTDs.

Several studies have shown that getting enough folic acid during pregnancy may also reduce the baby's risk of developing heart defects as well as mouth defects like cleft lip and palate.

2. Talk with your health care provider about the medications you are taking and if they are safe for pregnancy before you get pregnant.

If you have preexisting conditions like diabetes, hypertension, hyper or hypothyroidism or other medical conditions it is important to talk to your doctor about medication management and steps you can take to have a healthy pregnancy.

Your doctor can prescribe medications that are safe for pregnancy, and adjust your medication as needed throughout pregnancy. If these conditions are not monitored it can increase your risk of complications during pregnancy. →



3. Become up to date with all vaccines including the flu shot.

Certain vaccinations are recommended before you get pregnant, during pregnancy, and after you have your baby.

Ask your doctor which vaccinations are needed to reduce your risk of illness during and after pregnancy. The CDC recommends that all pregnant women get the flu shot and the whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy to reduce the risk of serious illness.

4. Try to reach or maintain a healthy weight prior to pregnancy. During pregnancy, strive to gain the amount of weight recommended by your doctor.

Being overweight or obese can make it difficult for women to get pregnant and it can increase the risk of having complications during pregnancy.

Making changes to your diet and starting an exercise routine that is approved by your doctor can help improve your chances of getting pregnant and having a healthy pregnancy.

Gaining the right amount of weight during pregnancy can also improve pregnancy outcomes. Weight gain recommendations depend on your BMI category and based on if you are having a single or multi-fetal pregnancy. See the chart for current weight gain recommendations.

Weight Gain Recommendations		
If before pregnancy you were...	You should gain	
	for Singleton Pregnancy	for Twin Pregnancy
Underweight BMI less than 18.5	28-40 pounds	50-62 pounds
Normal weight BMI 18.5-24.9	25-35 pounds	37-54 pounds
Overweight BMI 25-29.9	15-25 pounds	31-50 pounds
Obese BMI greater than or equal to 30	11-20 pounds	25-42 pounds



5. Avoid harmful substances like Alcohol, Tobacco and other drugs.

Alcohol: There is no safe time during pregnancy to drink alcohol. Alcohol consumption during pregnancy increases your risk for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, miscarriage, stillbirth, and other birth defects. It is a good idea to quit drinking before trying to conceive to improve your health and pregnancy outcomes. A recent observational study found an association with alcohol consumption prior to pregnancy and an increased risk of congenital heart defects. The study recommended avoiding alcohol up to one year before trying to conceive for women and up to 6 months for men.

Smoking: Smoking during pregnancy also can harm your baby. Smoke exposure during pregnancy can increase your risk of preterm birth, birth defects of the mouth and lip and Sudden Infant Death syndrome (SIDS) after baby is born. The nicotine found in e-cigarettes can also be harmful during pregnancy and could cause damage to the baby's brain and lungs. Ask your doctor for tips to quit smoking.

By taking these steps you can feel more confident that you are doing everything you can to have a healthy baby.

Resources:

Senmao Zhang, Lisan Wang, Tubao Yang, Lizhang Chen, Lijuan Zhao, Tingting Wang, Letao Chen, Ziwei Ye, Zan Zheng, Jiabi Qin. Parental alcohol consumption and the risk of congenital heart diseases in offspring: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis. *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, 2019; DOI: 10.1177/2047487319874530

What are birth defects? <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/facts.html>

Commit to healthy choices to help prevent birth defects. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/prevention.html>



Congenital Syphilis

By Melissa Holland, RN

There's a disease that's putting our community at risk. It is a disease that we thought was long gone, and it's getting transmitted to our babies before they are born. That disease is syphilis. Syphilis cases have been increasing in men and women nationally, including women of childbearing age. Untreated syphilis during pregnancy can result in devastating health outcomes for the baby, including stillbirth or perinatal death. Congenital syphilis can be prevented by early treatment of maternal syphilis.

Congenital syphilis is a severe, disabling, and often life-threatening infection seen in infants. A pregnant mother who has syphilis can spread the disease through the placenta to the unborn infant. Nearly one half of all children infected with syphilis while they are in the womb die shortly before or after birth. Congenital syphilis can also occur without symptoms.

Congenital syphilis is classified as “early” when the child exhibits symptoms at birth up to their second birthday, and “late” when symptoms start after age two. Early congenital syphilis can cause vision or hearing loss; non-viral hepatitis causing jaundice of the skin and eyes; long bone abnormalities; developmental delays; enlargement of the liver and /or spleen; inflammation of mucus membranes of the nose; rash; wart-like lesions on the genitals; and additional symptoms.

Older children may develop clinical symptoms of late congenital syphilis, including problems with bone and teeth development, hearing, vision, and the central nervous and cardiovascular systems.

In 2018, Texas saw increased cases of syphilis in women of childbearing age and of Congenital Syphilis. In Texas, the number of CS cases increased 124 % between 2017 (164 cases) and 2018 (367 cases). This is the largest number of CS cases reported annually in Texas in more than 20 years and includes 352 probable cases, 2 confirmed cases, and 13 cases of syphilitic stillbirth.

The top five reporting jurisdictions for Texas were Harris County (104), Bexar County (61), Dallas County (60), Region 11 (South Texas) (45), and Tarrant County (21).

As of September 1, 2019 Texas Health and Safety Code 81.090 requires all pregnant women in Texas to be tested for syphilis at their first prenatal visit, again after 28 weeks gestation, and at delivery.

Congenital syphilis cases are more likely to occur when pregnant women with syphilis receive late prenatal care or no prenatal care at all. With early prenatal care, a mother can be tested and treated for syphilis.

Early treatment will avert the devastating health outcomes for babies and children.



How to Protect Your Child's Teeth

by Lynne Wright, RDA



- Starting at age 6 months, begin taking your child to the dentist.
- Routine dental visits and cleanings help maintain your child's teeth and reduce fear.
- Clean your child's teeth after every meal and continue assisting your child with teeth cleaning until the age of 6-7.
- Even when your child is an infant you should clean out their mouth.
 - Take a warm, wet washcloth and your finger to wipe the top of their mouth, along their gums near their cheeks and tongue. This prevents bacteria from collecting.
- Only use a pearl-drop sized amount of toothpaste and a soft bristle brush.
- Offer healthy foods and drinks.
- Do not share: silverware, cups, toothbrushes or pacifiers.
- Do not allow your child to walk or run with their toothbrush. If they fall, they could be injured.

Vital Stats Award

The 5 Star award acknowledges Vital Statistics Partners who understand the importance of vital statistics and its impact on the citizens of Texas. This award honors Partners who go above and beyond the duties of birth and death registration by attending trainings & keeping up with the latest legislation and trends.



Above: ATPHD celebrated Thanksgiving as a team with a staff potluck where all retirees were invited.



Above: Ugly Sweater Contest.



Winter Weather is Here... Are you Ready?

Vehicle Maintenance

- Service radiator
- Check tire pressure
- Ensure tires have adequate tread
- Verify anti-freeze levels



Weatherproof Your Home

- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows
- Check and repair insulation
- Be aware of water line freeze warnings

Fireplace Safety

- Have fireplaces inspected annually
- Ensure all exhaust fumes are directed outside
- Check batteries in smoke and CO detectors



Bring Pets Inside

- Ensure pets have adequate shelter
- Location should be temperature regulated
- Store extra pet food for emergencies
- Make sure water is not frozen

Prepare for Power Outages

- Purchase a radio
- Have access to flashlight and extra batteries
- Ensure power banks are operational
- Only use generators outside



Emergency Supply Kit

- First aid items
- Non-perishable food items
- Water bottles
- Prescription medication

Upcoming Events

January 6th:
Free STD Testing at Mercy
8:00-10:00am & 1:00-3:00pm

February 3rd:
Free STD Testing at Mercy
8:00-10:00am & 1:00-3:00pm

March 2nd:
Free STD Testing at Mercy
8:00-10:00am & 1:00-3:00pm

About the Health Department

Our Mission: To protect and promote the health of all in Abilene and Taylor County through research, advocacy, and services that prevent disease and enhance the well-being of the community and the environment in which they live.

Our Vision: Partnering with the community, we will create an environment where all have the opportunity to improve their health and quality of life.

Our Values:

PROFESSIONALISM: We exemplify professionalism through respect, excellence, and teamwork.

QUALITY: We provide exceptional, valuable services for our community.

INTEGRITY: We serve with accountability and consistency to build community trust.

INNOVATION: We effectively use evidence-based strategies and best practices to advance public health.

COLLABORATION: We collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to promote community health and prevent disease.



Health District

850 North 6th Street
Abilene, Texas 79601
(325) 692-5600
Monday-Friday
8:00 am – 5:00 pm

Connect with us:



AbileneHealth
MercyHealthCareCenter



AbileneHealthDepartment



AbileneHealth

MERCY Health Care Center

1902 Shelton Street
Abilene, Texas 79603
(325) 676-6634
Monday-Friday
8:00 am – 12:00 pm
1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

abilenetx.gov/Health